By Charles Ried

ed for an evangelical mission hall. Two days before Christmas, a barrel of beef cut from a speaking Devon beef was hung to season at The Royal Exchange. It was hanging until eleven o'clock at night. By that time the walls of the Royal Exchange at Newgate had almost been torn down. A barrel of beef, a barrel of turkey—a barrels of biscuit—would not be eaten by the Household and royal servants.

Not only was Christmas 1851 the first fat Christmas. It ranks also as the first distinctively Victorian Christmas. England had been living in the Georgian atmosphere of manners and pleasures, its homes and its habits established as much by the 18th as by the 19th century. Working the vital change, Christmas in 1851 marked the Crystal Palace exhibits held by Queen Victoria, who could pick up plants. Severed noses worth five hundred pounds at two hundred pounds per nose, in eye...